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SUBJECT: RANDAL ARTICLE

1. FOLLOWING STORIES APPEARED FRONT PAGE AUGUST 16
WASHINGTON POST.

2. PRISONERS OF AFRICA'S LAST EMPIRE BY JONATHAN C. RANDAL.

THE FOLLOWING DISPATCH WAS HELD FOR THREE WEEKS UNTIL
ASSOCIATED PRESS CORRESPONDENT MICHAEL GOLDSMITH, WHO WAS
ARRESTED IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE AT THE SAME TIME AS
THE WASHINGTON POST'S JONATHAN RANDAL, WAS RELEASED. RANDAL
SPENT A WEEK IN PRISON. GOLDSMITH, HELD FOR A MONTH ON
CHARGES OF BEING A SOUTH AFRICAN SPY, WAS RELEASED
OVER THE WEEKEND. IN A SECOND ARTICLE WEDNESDAY RANDAL
REPORTS ON THE GENERAL SITUATION IN THE EMPIRE.

PARIS- I WAS A PRISONER FOR A WEEK IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN
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EMPIRE.

THE EPISODE BEGAN WITH MY ARREST ONE MIDNIGHT AND ENDED
WHEN I WAS THRUST, BAREFOOT, UNSHAVEN AND MANACLED, BEFORE
THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS CONVOKED TO THE IMPERIAL COURT OF
EMPEROR BOKASSA I AT BERENGO, SOME 40 MILES SOUTHWEST OF
BANGUI, HIS CAPITAL.

THE SERVITORS OF AFRICA'S ONLY EMPEROR HELD ME
INCOMMUNICADO, NEVER INTERROGATED ME OR CHARGED ME WITH

ANYTHING, AND DENIED US CONSULAR OFFICIALS ACCESS TO ME.

PRESENT ALONG WITH THE DIPLOMATS IN THE AUDITORIUM-BUILDING WHERE I WAS PRODUCED AS EXHIBIT A WERE BOTH OF THE EMPIRE'S CABINETS, ONE FOR ROUTINE GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND ONE FOR IMPERIAL AND COURT AFFAIRS.

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY-DRESSED IN A DARK LEISURE SUIT AND OCCASSIONALLY RINGING A SMALL BELL LIKE A PRIEST OFFICIATING AT A MASS-DENOUNCED ME AS A SPY, THEN ALMOST IMMEDIATELY EXONERATED ME, CHARGED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS BEHIND "ALL AFRICA'S TROUBLES" AND BANNED ALL AMERICAN TOURISTS, THEN RELENTED. FINALLY, AS I WAS PHOTOGRAPHED AND FILMED, I WAS TURNED OVER TO THE AMERICAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES AND ORDERED EXPELLED.

I WAS LUCKY. LESS SO WAS MICHAEL GOLDSMITH, OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, MY COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND OF 20 YEARS WHO WAS ARRESTED JULY 14, THREE HOURS BEFORE ME AT THE ROCK HOTEL, WHERE WE WERE STAYING. HE HAS NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE.

BRITAIN, WHICH MAINTAINS NO EMBASSY IN THE EMPIRE,
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FINALLY BECAME WORRIED ABOUT GOLDSMITH, A BRITISH SUBJECT, AND SENT IN A CONSUL FROM NEIGHBORING CAMEROON THREE DAYS AFTER MY RELEASE.

BUT THE MISSION WAS ILL-STARRED FROM THE START. EMPIRE OFFICIALS IMPOUNED THE CHARTERED PLANE CARRYING THE CONSUL ON THE GROUND THAT IT HAD NOT RECEIVEDD PROPER OVERFLIGHT APPROVAL. THE PLANE WAS RELEASED FOUR DAYS LATER, BUT THE CONSUL FINALLY LEFT WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO SEE GOLDSMITH.

HIS ERROR WAS TO HAVE FILED FROM BANGUI HIS STORY ON THE PREPARATIONS SURROUNDING THE PLANNED DECEMBER CORONATION OF THE ONE-TIME FRENCH COLONIAL ARMY SERGEANT WHO SEIZED POWER ON NEW YEAR'S EVE 1965. GOLDSMITH AND I HAD PLANNED TO LEAVE THE EMPIRE THE MORNING OF JULY 15.

THE EMPEROR INSISTED THAT WE WERE BOTH GUILTY OF HAVING VIOLATED A 1975 LAW-WHICH, LIKE MANY OF BOKASSA'S DECREES, HAD FALLEN INTO DISUSE-REQUIRING ALL FOREIGN JOURNALISTS TO CHECK IN WITH THE POLICE CHIEF AND DEPOSIT DOLLARS 400 (ONLY 80 PER CENT OF WHICH IS REIMBURSED UPON DEPARTURE). DURING THE MORE-THAN-TWO-HOUR IMPERIAL PERFORMANCE GOLDSMITH'S DISPATCH WAS DENOUNCED AS "ERRONEOUS, EXAGGERATED AND DEFAMATORY" AND JUDGED AS CONSTITUTING

"ESPIONAGE" AND A PLOT TO "UNDERMINE STATE SECURITY".

THE EMPEROR'S REACTION WAS NOT PARTICULARLY SURPRISING, FOR HE HAS A RECORD OF BITTER QUARRELS WITH THE WORLD PRESS. HE HAS NOT FORGIVEN NEWSMEN FOR RECORDING HIS OFTEN-MERCURIAL MOODS AND ACTS, HIS QUESTIONABLE FINANCIAL OPERATIONS, HIS PENCHANT FOR MEDALS AND TITLES SUCH AS FIELD MARSHAL, PRESIDENT FOR LIFE OR, SINCE DECEMBER, EMPEROR.

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IN HIS BERENGO TIRADE HE DISARMINGLY CONCEDED THAT THE WESTERN PRESS OFTEN DOES GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THINGS, BUT INSISTED THAT THAT IS NONE OF THEIR BUSINESS. HE ARGUED THAT THE REST OF THE WORLD SHOULD APPLY CENSORSHIP SINCE HE HIMSELF NEVER ALLOWED ANY CRITICISM OF A FOREIGN POWER IN THE EMPIRE'S SOLE PRINTED PUBLICATION, A MONTHLY.

STILL, THE EMPEROR'S INCARCERATION OF VISITING JOURNALISTS DOES, ON THE SURFACE, RUN THE RISK OF COMPROMISING THE VERY THING HE HOLDS MOST IMPORTANT-HIS CORONATION.

HE DESPERATELY WANTS THE WIDEST POSSIBLE MEDIA COVERAGE AND HOPES TO HAVE THE PROCEEDINGS TELEVISED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD; INDEED, SEVERAL OF THE 23 SPECIAL COMMITTEES WORKING ON CORONATION ARRANGEMENTS DEAL WITH PRESS AND COMMUNICATION MATTERS.

IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER HE REALIZES THAT MAJOR NEWS ORGANIZATIONS MAY HESITATE NOW BEFORE SENDING REPRESENTATIVES TO A COUNTRY THAT JAILS REPORTERS SO CAVALIERLY.

BUT THEN AGAIN, JAIL IS A WAY OF LIFE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE, WHERE CITIZENS ARE IMPRISONED FOR REASONS THAT MAY STRIKE FOREIGNERS AS ODD.

SAMPLE CASES I ENCOUNTERED INVOLVED UNRESOLVED RESPONSIBILITY IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT, MUDDLED OFFICE BOOKKEEPING PETTY THIEVERY OF A T-SHIRT OR PAIR OF UNDERPANTS, OUTDATED AUTOMOBILE OR MOTORBIKE INSURANCE.

THE EMPIRE'S HIGH AND MIGHTY ARE AS RESIGNED AS THE ORDINARY CITIZENS TO SPENDING TIME IN JAIL-AND NO STIGMA

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IS ATTACHED, SINCE EVEN CABINET MINISTERS OFTEN GET EVEN

BETTER JOBS AFTER THEIR ARRESTS.

FOR THE RECORD I SHOULD TESTIFY THAT I WAS NEVER

PHYSICALLY MISTREATED, ALTHOUGH ONCE I WAS THREATENED BY A DRUNKEN POLICE LIEUTENANT UPON INSISTING ON MY RIGHT TO CONTACT THE AMERICAN CONSUL. CENTRAL AFRICAN PRISONERS WERE BEATEN ROUTINELY FOR NO DISCERNIBLE REASON.

AT WORST, I HAD TO KEEP REMINDING THE POLICE TO PROVIDE ME REGULARLY WITH VARIOUS MEDICINES IN MY SUITCASE, WHICH WAS KEPT OUTSIDE THE CELL.

THE FIRST NIGHT AND DAY I WAS STRIPPED OF SHORTS, SOCKS AND SHOES AND KEPT IN A TINY CELL JUST LARGE ENOUGH TO ALLOW ITS FIVE OCCUPANTS TO LIE DOWN. A LARGE DISHPAN SERVED AS THE TOILET.

I WAS THEN TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER POLICE STATION, NEAR THE OLD AIRPORT, WHERE I WAS ALLOWED TO HAVE A SHIRT, I WAS ASSIGNED AN 11-BY-5-FOOT CELL, A LUXURY CONSIDERING THAT AS MANY AS EIGHT CENTRAL AFRICAN PRISONERS SLEPT IN AN IDENTICAL CELL NEXT DOOR. WE ALL SLEPT ON THE CONCRETE FLOOR. THERE WERE NO CHAIRS OR ANY OTHER FURNITURE, BUT BOTH A SHOWER AND A TURKISH-STYLE TOILET WERE AVAILABLE.

AFTER FOUR DAYS I PERSUADED MY CAPTORS TO LET ME HAVE MY TOOTHBRUSH, TOOTHPASTE AND SOAP.

CASH THE POLICE HAD SEIZED AMONG MY BELONGINGS WAS USED TO BUY ME FOOD, BUT ALMOST INVARIABLY IT WAS BROUGHT WELL AFTER NORMAL MEALTIMES. THE CENTRAL AFRICAN PRISONERS OFTEN OFFERED TO SHARE WITH ME THE FOOD PREPARED BY THEIR FAMILIES, WHICH WAS BROUGHT TWICE DAILY. OFTEN, THE POLICE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND THINGS AS SIMPLE AS A HAM
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SANDWICH OR BANANAS, PROMPTING THE POSSIBLY NOT ENTIRELY PARANOID THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE SAVORING THE EXPERIENCE OF LORDING IT OVER A WHITE PRISONER. MY FELLOW PRISONERS, IN ANY CASE, WERE SHOCKED AT SUCH BEHAVIOR.

POLICE OFFICERS WERE UNIVERSALLY RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE THEIR NAMES. ONE LIEUTENANT ENJOYED WAKING ME UP AT MID-NIGHT WITH FALSE REPORTS OF MY IMPENDING RELEASE.

BUT BY FAR THE MOST UNPLEASANT ASPECT OF JAIL WAS THE ARMY OF MOSQUITOES THAT ATTACKED THE PRISONERS THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT, MAKING SLEEP ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL AFTER DAWN WHEN THEY FLEW OFF.

NOT EVEN THE LOCAL STATION CAPTAIN KNEW WHY I WAS DETAINED, AND EVEN HE APPEARED TOO FRIGHTENED TO DARE TO ASK. THE STANDARD ANSWER WAS THAT I HAD BEEN "PLACED AT THE DISPOSITION OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE POLICE". HE WAS A LARGE, TOUGH AND UNSMILING MAN PRESENT BOTH AT MY ARREST AND AT MY RELEASE FROM THE POLICE STATION. I WAS EXTRACTED FROM MY CELL AT 11 P.M. JULY 20, AND TAKEN ACROSS THE STREET TO THE STATION HOUSE PROPER WHERE HE WAS WAITING IN THE COMPANY OF THE INTERIOR MINISTER.

I WAS TAKEN BACK TO THE ROCK HOTEL AND ALLOWED TO SLEEP. FOUR ARMED MEN WERE STATIONED IN THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MY ROOM. EARLY THE NEXT MORNING I WAS AWAKENED AND DRIVEN DOWN ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S TWO MAIN PAVED ROADS TOWARD BERENGO. ABOUT 10 MINUTES BEFORE ARRIVING AT THE IMPERIAL COURT, THE CAR STOPPED AND TWO POLICE CAPTAINS WHO HAD BEEN PRESENT AT MY ARREST SLIPPED LIGHT, FRENCH-MADE ALUMINUM HANDCUFFS ON MY WRISTS.

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WHEN I ASKED WHY, I WAS TOLD IT WAS BECAUSE I WAS TO HAVE THE "SIGNAL HONOR" OF MEETING THE EMPEROR, AFTER WHICH I WAS TO BE EXPELLED.

I FEAR THAT THEY RATHER SPOILED THE DRAMATIC EFFECT, THAT HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY HAD SOUGHT, FOR THAT INFORMATION BUOYED ME DURING THE EMPEROR'S MORE IMPASSIONED CHARGES OF ESPIONAGE.

NONETHELESS, IT WAS QUITE A SHOW.

3. AP ARTICLE - LONDON, AUGUST 19-ASSOCIATED PRESS CORRESPONDENT MICHAEL GOLDSMITH, HELD IN PRISON FOR A MONTH IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE, ARRIVED HERE LATE TODAY AFTER BEING RELEASED.

GOLDSMITH, 55, SAID HE HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF ESPIONAGE, VIOLATING THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY OF THE STATE ON INSULTING EMPEROR BOKASSA I, HE DENIED THE CHARGES.

HE SAID HE HAD BEEN KEPT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S CENTRAL PRISON IN BANGUI, THE CAPITAL.

HE WAS RELEASED AFTER DIPLOMATIC AND OTHER EFFORTS AND FOLLOWING AN APPEAL FROM HIS WIFE, ROXANNE, TO BOKASSA.

GOLDSMITH, WHO HAD A BRIEF REUNION WITH HIS WIFE IN NICE, FRANCE, BEFORE FLYING TO LONDON, WAS RESTING HERE AND VISITING HIS MOTHER, WHO IS SERIOUSLY ILL.

HE DECLINED TO COMMENT IMMEDIATELY ON HIS ARREST AND CONFINEMENT BUT SAID HE IS "IN GOOD HEALTH NOW," DESPITE A HISTORY OF HEART TROUBLE.

A BRITISH CITIZEN ASSIGNED TO THE AP OFFICE IN PARIS,

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GOLDSMITH WENT TO BANGUI JULY 11 FOR A FOUR-DAY STAY. HE WAS DETAINED JULY 14, AFTER FILING A STORY ON THE EMPEROR AND HIS PLANS FOR A CORONATION DEC. 4.

SELWYN PRINCE, A BRITISH CONSUL STATIONED IN CHAD, FLEW TO BANGUI IN LATE JULY AND MET WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE, BUT THE MINISTER REFUSED TO DISCUSS GOLDSMITH'S CASE. OTHER OFFICIALS TOLD PRINCE THEY BELIEVED GOLDSMITH TO BE A SOUTH AFRICAN.

AP PRESIDENT KEITH FULLER MADE AN APPEAL FOR THE RELEASE OF THE VETERAN REPORTER, WHICH U.S. AMBASSADOR ANTHONY QUANTON RELAYED TO THE EMPEROR AUG. 1.

"I HAVE NO REPLY TO MAKE TO HIM," BOKASSA TOLD AMBASSADOR QUANTON. "AMERICAN JOURNALISTS SHOULD STAY HOME AND STOP WRITING ABOUT ALLEGED MISDEEDS OF BOKASSA".

GOLDSMITH'S WIFE APPEALED FOR HIS RELEASE ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, CITING HIS MOTHER'S ILLNESS AND HIS HEART AILMENT. BOKASSA REPLIED THAT THE CORRESPONDENT'S HEALTH AND HIS FAMILY'S FEELINGS WERE NOT RELEVANT IN LIGHT OF THE VOLUMINOUS DOCUMENTATION ABOUT HIS ACTIVITIES."

THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE, AN ORGANIZATION OF 1,800 JOURNALISTS IN 62 COUNTRIES, ALSO APPEALED FOR GOLDSMITH'S RELEASE. A CABLED REPLY IN FRENCH FROM THE EMPEROR SAID:

"YOU SHOULD ONE DAY PAY THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR SO-CALLED FREE PRESS...IF YOU FELL THE STRONGEST OF ALL MEN YOU SHOULD COME AND FREE MICHAEL GOLDSMITH YOURSELF. YOU CAN IMAGINE WHAT FASHION WE ARE WAITING TO RECEIVE YOU."

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4. DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT. VANCE

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